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TAGS: [AF](#) [FI](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [SWE](#)
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MOD ON RC-NORTH CHANGES, POLITICAL
SUPPORT

REF: A. HELSINKI 71
[1](#)B. STOCKHOLM 79

Classified By: P-E Chief Scott Brandon, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: MOD Policy Director Jarvenpaa discussed potential realignment of RC-North, the new Turkish PRT there, and political support for Finland's activities in Afghanistan with P-E Chief in a February 23 meeting. Post requests additional releasable information regarding increased U.S. military forces in RC-North (see para. 6). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) In a February 23 meeting with P-E Chief, MOD Policy Director Pauli Jarvenpaa related his understanding that German authorities are considering a realignment of RC-North under which Germany would take over responsibilities for PRT operations in the area surrounding Mazar-e-Sharif while Sweden and Finland shifted their PRT from Mazar-e-Sharif to the northwestern portion of RC-North around Faryab. Jarvenpaa did not raise the issue himself nor did he express an opinion on the merits of the idea, which he characterized as "under internal German discussion." Jarvenpaa did opine that Sweden might not be particularly keen on leaving Mazar-e-Sharif given the amount they had invested in infrastructure there, and that such a move would put the Swedes right back where they started.

[1](#)3. (C) Jarvenpaa confirmed that discussions were ongoing among RC-North contributors about the new Turkish PRT there. He understood that the Turks had modified their initial concept for a "civilian PRT" and would deploy roughly 100 soldiers along with the same number of civilian experts.

[1](#)4. (C) Jarvenpaa related that he had just returned from testifying before the parliament's foreign affairs committee on Afghanistan. The committee strongly supported the government's planned increases in Finnish military and civilian contributions, and many members were eager to hear details on Finnish military operations which were provided by FDF Operations Chief MG Raty and the immediate former commander of Finnish forces in Afghanistan. While the SDP statement at the plenary session the previous week (ref A) had not endorsed the increases, Jarvenpaa felt comfortable that the SDP was still behind the policy. "Perhaps they got a phone call from the President," he mused, referring to the fact that President Halonen, officially nonpartisan but from the SDP, supported the government's policy. When asked about parliamentary visits to Afghanistan, Jarvenpaa could not recall that any Finnish parliamentarians had visited except those that were serving ministers. He pointed to the difficulty of providing security for such a visit, which would only be feasible for a handful of MPs at the most.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: We continue to ask members of parliament and government officials whether there is any consideration given to a parliamentary visit to Afghanistan, given the significant Finnish commitment there over the last eight years. Cost and security are frequently raised as obstacles by MFA and MOD officials, though most parliamentarians indicate that they would jump at a chance to see things for

themselves. While Afghanistan is on track to become Finland's largest and longest-running crisis management operation, its merits will continue to be debated by MPs, almost none of whom have any direct experience of conditions on the ground there. END COMMENT.

16. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Jarvenpaa requested more information on U.S. troop increases in RC-North. MPs had questioned him on the effect of the heightened U.S. military presence in RC-North. He explained that this would help the COIN effort and so would be advantageous for Finland. Post requests releasable information on the plans for an increased U.S. military presence in RC-North which we can share with the GOF. REL ISAF information for government use only as well as less detailed information which could be used to address questions from parliamentarians and the media would be helpful.
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